SHADOW STRIKES
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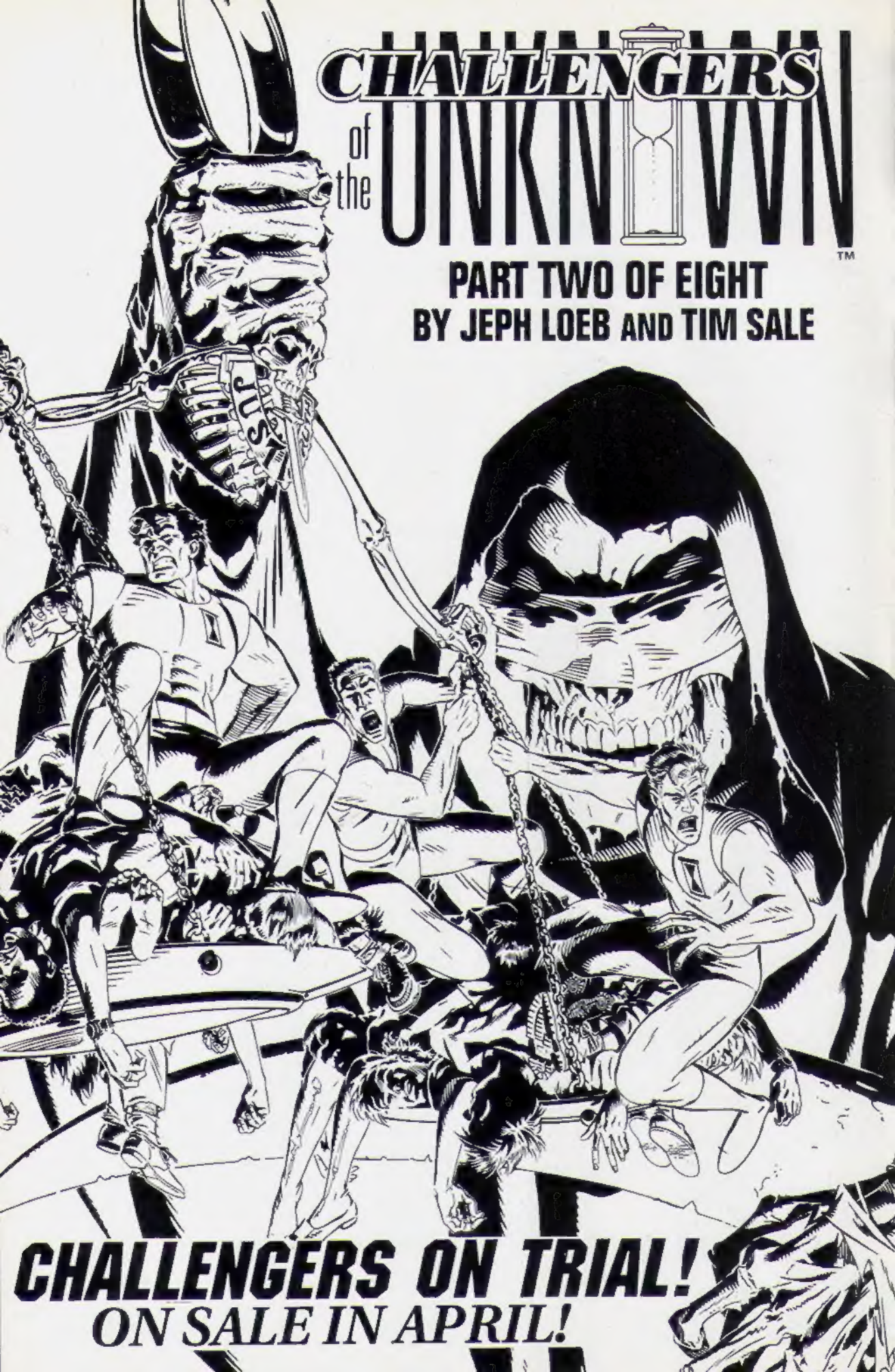
THE Shadow STRIKES
"DEATH'S HARLEQUIN"
by Jones, Whigham & Fernandez


CHALLENGERS
of the UNKNOWN™
PART TWO OF EIGHT
BY JEPH LOEB AND TIM SALE
CHALLENGERS ON TRIAL!
ON SALE IN APRIL!

LAMONT CRANSTON WILL LIVE, I THINK...
...TAKE HIM TO THE NEAREST HOSPITAL.
TAXI
IT WAS HERE THAT BILLY VIOLET DROVE AFTER THE LAST KILLING.
BUT THIS TIME THE CAR IS ALREADY HERE, THE ENGINE COOL.
GARAGE EXIT

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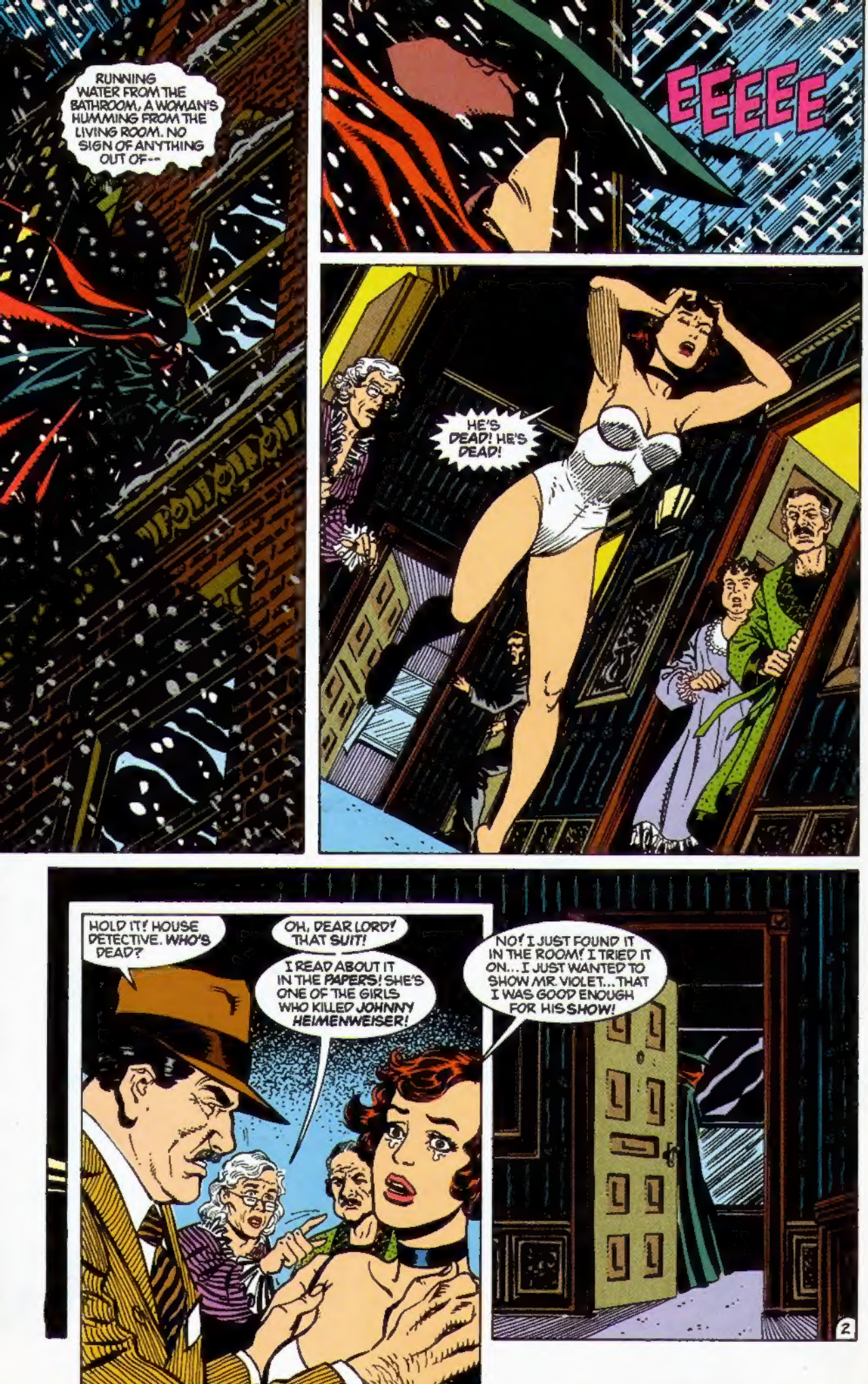
RUNNING WATER FROM THE BATHROOM, A WOMAN'S HUMMING FROM THE LIVING ROOM. NO SIGN OF ANYTHING OUT OF--
EEEEE
HE'S DEAD! HE'S DEAD!
HOLD IT! HOUSE DETECTIVE. WHO'S DEAD?
OH, DEAR LORD! THAT SUIT!
I READ ABOUT IT IN THE PAPERS! SHE'S ONE OF THE GIRLS WHO KILLED JOHNNY HEIMENWEISER!
NO! I JUST FOUND IT IN THE ROOM! I TRIED IT ON... I JUST WANTED TO SHOW MR. VIOLET... THAT I WAS GOOD ENOUGH FOR HIS SHOW!
2

DEATH'S Harlequin

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YOU'RE LUCKY THAT CAB DRIVER FOUND YOU, MR. CRANSTON.
MM. TERRIBLY.
DOCTOR SAYS YOU AREN'T VITALLY WOUNDED, BUT YOU MIGHT HAVE BLED TO DEATH WITHOUT CARE.

NOW REST COMFORTABLY, AND IF THE PAIN IS TOO GREAT...

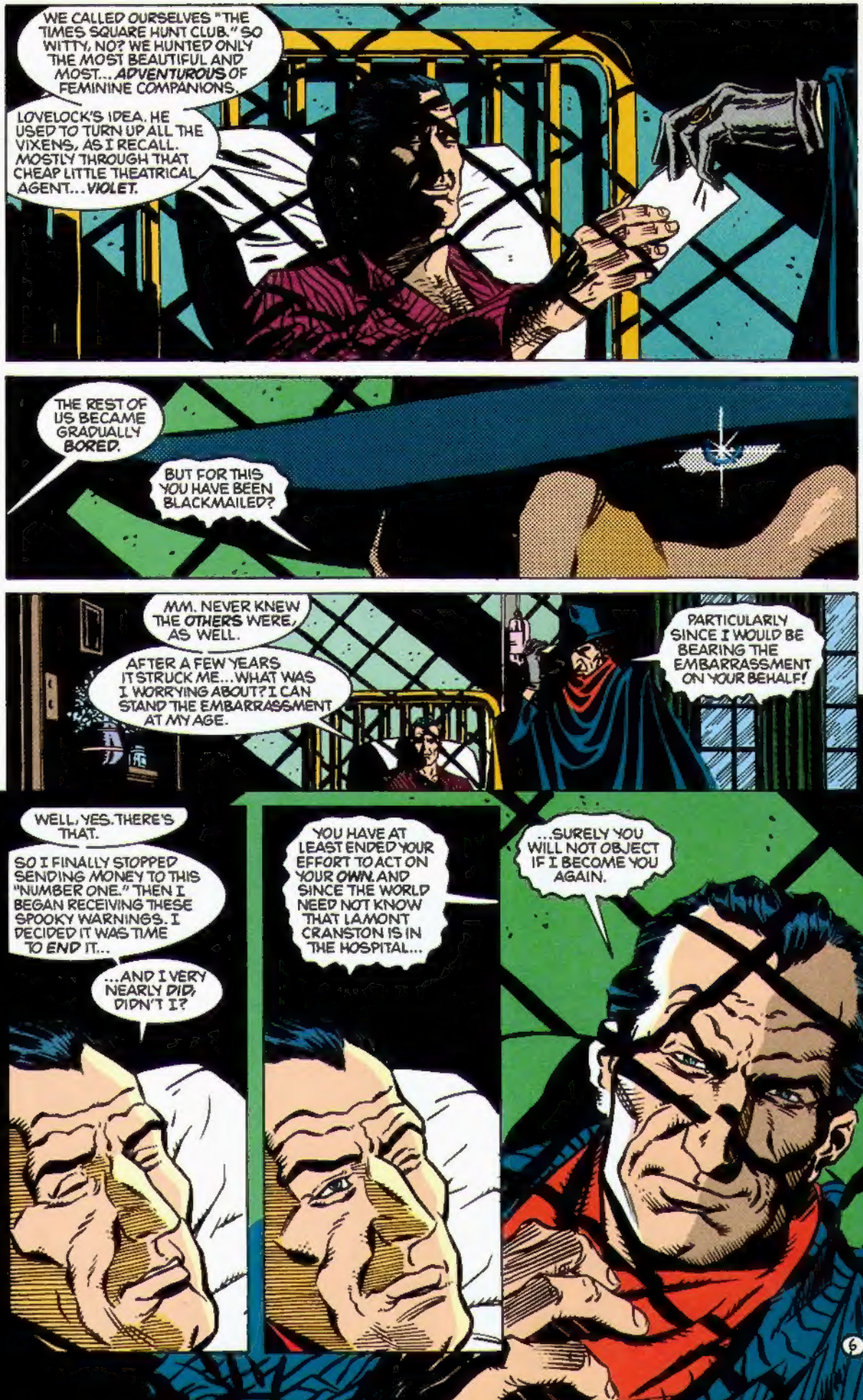
...MR. CRANSTON!

I AM HERE TO TEND TO YOUR MEDICAL NEEDS, MR. CRANSTON. PLEASE LET US LEAVE IT AT THAT.

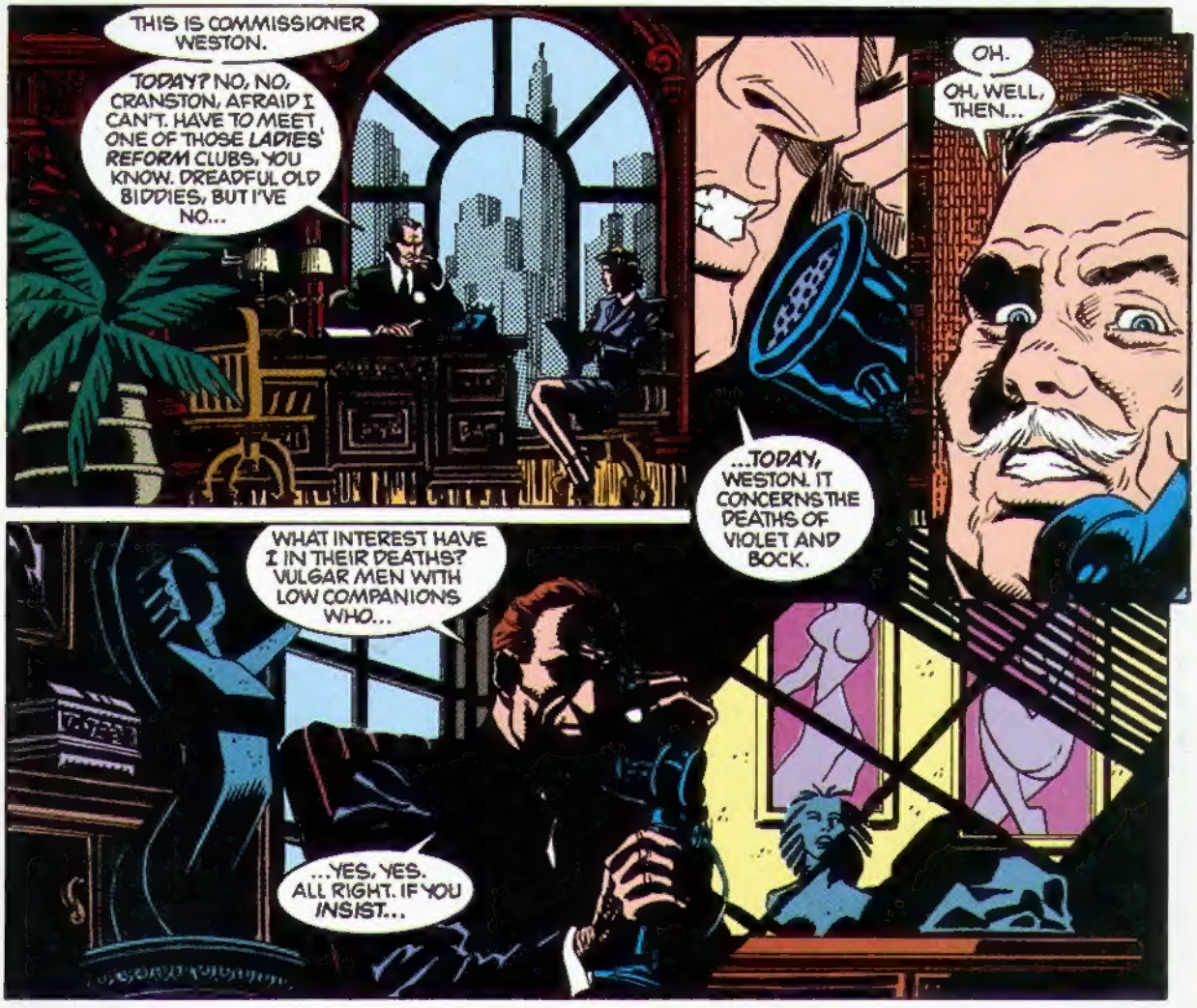
ALAS. NOTHING'S CHANGED IN ALL THESE YEARS.

I SEE THAT YOU ARE NOT TOO BADLY INJURED, CRANSTON.

AFTER TWO YEARS IN THE FLESH-POTS OF THE ORIENT, IT'S THRILLING TO SEE A WESTERN WOMAN AGAIN. EVEN A... SISTER OF MERCY.
YOU DID NOT WARN ME THAT YOU WERE RETURNING.
I HAD A BIT OF PERSONAL BUSINESS...
WITH NUMBER ONE. WHAT DO YOU KNOW OF HIM?
AH, WELL. NO POINT IN CONCEALING ANYTHING FROM YOU, IS THERE?
I DON'T KNOW WHO HE IS. ONLY THAT HE'S BEEN BLACKMAILING ME FOR YEARS OVER A... YOUTHFUL INDISCRETION.
YOUR AGENT CLAUDE FELLOWS HAS BEEN SO GOOD ABOUT SEPARATING OUR MAIL... AND SENDING ME THE LETTERS TRULY INTENDED FOR ME...
...WELL. THE LATEST WAS A SUMMONS FROM NUMBER ONE.
I HAVE SEEN IT. AND WHAT WAS YOUR "INDISCRETION"?
JUST A LITTLE SOMETHING WITH A GIRL, YOU KNOW. THAT WAS THE "ROARING TWENTIES," AFTER ALL. LOST DECADE, AND ALL THAT. DON'T ASK ME TO REMEMBER DETAILS.
CAN YOU GIVE ME SOME WATER?
I FOUND THIS LIST IN BILLY VIOLET'S POCKET.
HEIMENWEISER
VIOLET
BOCK
LOVELOCK
CRANSTON
AH. YES. THE OLD CLUB. LESS A FEW.
5


WE CALLED OURSELVES "THE TIMES SQUARE HUNT CLUB." SO WITTY, NO? WE HUNTED ONLY THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AND MOST... ADVENTUROUS OF FEMININE COMPANIONS.
LOVELOCK'S IDEA. HE USED TO TURN UP ALL THE VIXENS, AS I RECALL. MOSTLY THROUGH THAT CHEAP LITTLE THEATRICAL AGENT... VIOLET.
THE REST OF US BECAME GRADUALLY BORED.
BUT FOR THIS YOU HAVE BEEN BLACKMAILED?
MM. NEVER KNEW THE OTHERS WERE, AS WELL.
AFTER A FEW YEARS IT STRUCK ME... WHAT WAS I WORRYING ABOUT? I CAN STAND THE EMBARRASSMENT AT MY AGE.
PARTICULARLY SINCE I WOULD BE BEARING THE EMBARRASSMENT ON YOUR BEHALF!
WELL, YES. THERE'S THAT.
SO I FINALLY STOPPED SENDING MONEY TO THIS "NUMBER ONE." THEN I BEGAN RECEIVING THESE SPOOKY WARNINGS. I DECIDED IT WAS TIME TO END IT...
...AND I VERY NEARLY DID, DIDN'T I?
YOU HAVE AT LEAST ENDED YOUR EFFORT TO ACT ON YOUR OWN. AND SINCE THE WORLD NEED NOT KNOW THAT LAMONT CRANSTON IS IN THE HOSPITAL...
...SURELY YOU WILL NOT OBJECT IF I BECOME YOU AGAIN.

GOOD MORNING TO YOU, MR. CRANSTON.
COBALT CLUB
I'LL BE MAKING SOME CALLS, NANDO. PLEASE SEE THAT I AM NOT DISTURBED.


THIS IS COMMISSIONER WESTON.
TODAY? NO, NO, CRANSTON, AFRAID I CAN'T. HAVE TO MEET ONE OF THOSE LADIES' REFORM CLUBS, YOU KNOW. DREADFUL OLD BIDDIES, BUT I'VE NO...
OH.
OH, WELL, THEN...
...TODAY, WESTON. IT CONCERNS THE DEATHS OF VIOLET AND BOCK.
WHAT INTEREST HAVE I IN THEIR DEATHS? VULGAR MEN WITH LOW COMPANIONS WHO...
...YES, YES. ALL RIGHT. IF YOU INSIST...

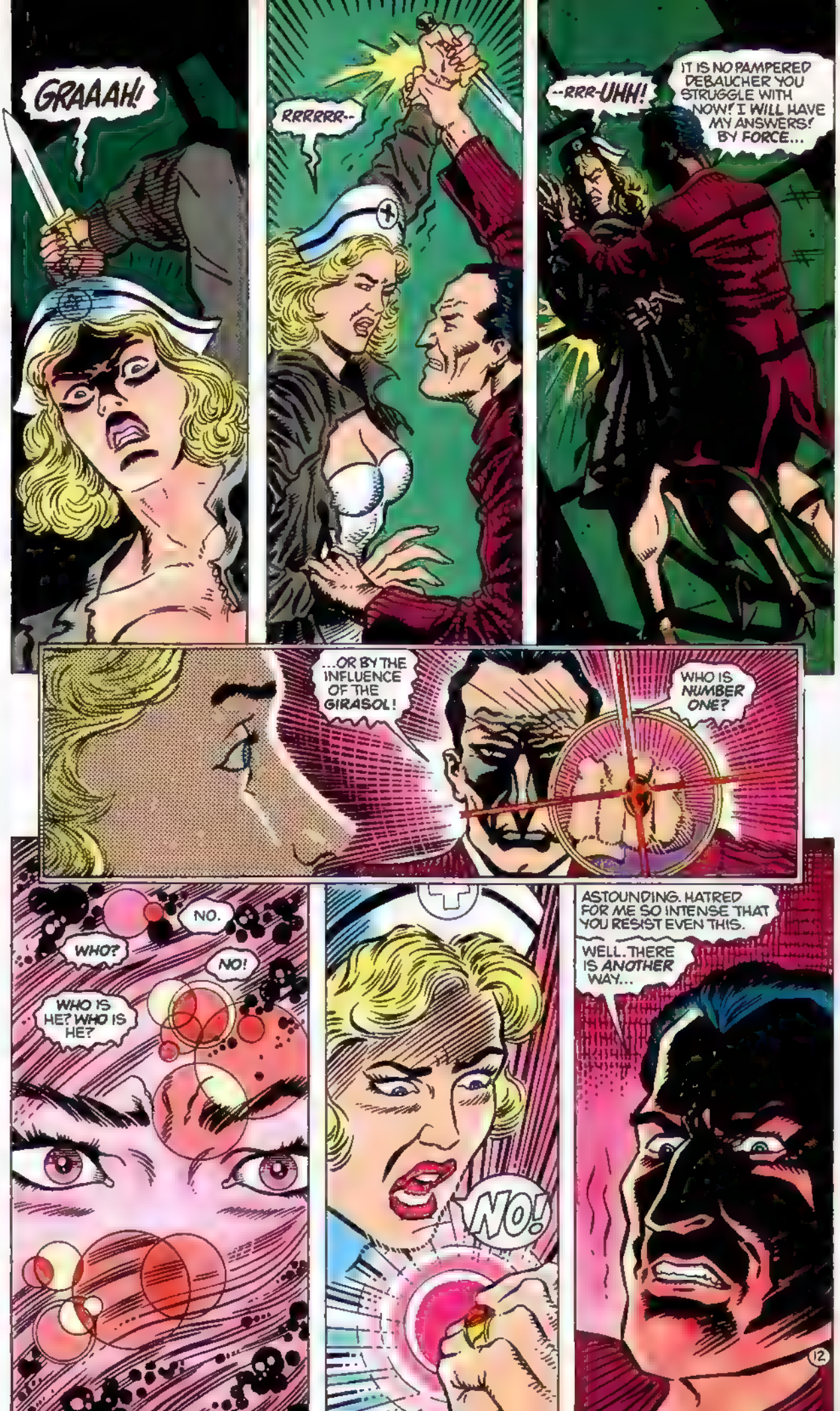
GOOD LORD, CRANSTON, WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
OF COURSE I'LL JOIN YOU! BUT, ONE THING... I HAVE TO SEE SOMEONE LATER, SO I MUST INSIST THAT WE MEET THERE...

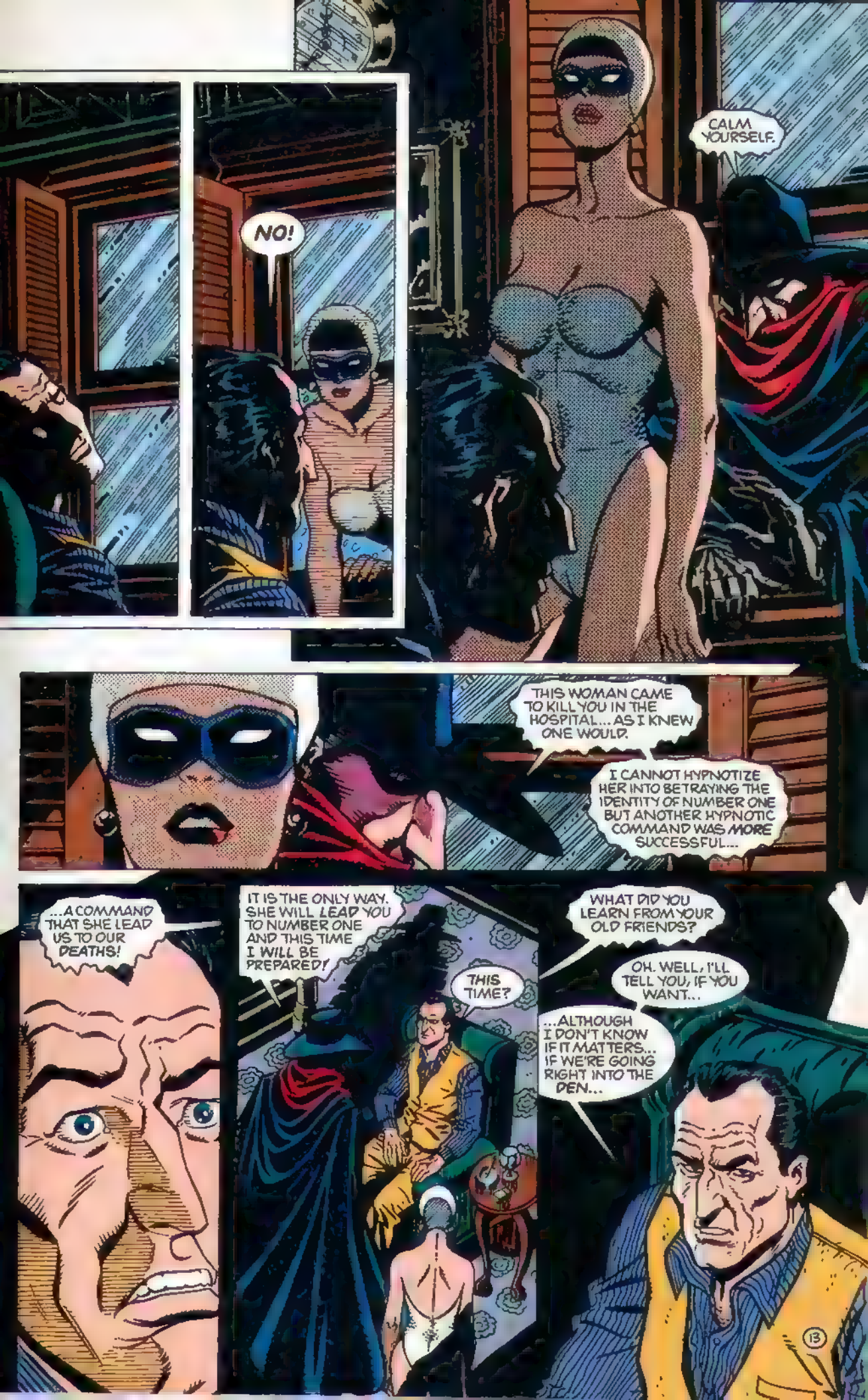
"...AT 'BAMA'S."
JUST SIT DOWN HERE, DARLING. THEN YOU CAN KEEP ALL THE CHANGE!
BOOM
FLOOR SHOW
COME ALONG, NOW! JUST A LITTLE VISIT. JUST A KISS OR TWO!
FIVE DOLLARS IS A LOT OF MONEY TO A LITTLE LADY LIKE YOU, ISN'T IT?
'BAMA!
CIGARETTES
"GOT WHAT THEY DESERVED," POOLE?
YOU HEARD ME. WHAT WAS VIOLET BUT A FLESH-PEDDLER? AND BOCK? A HEN-PECKED LITTLE VICTIM OF WOMANHOOD.
IT'S RUINED THIS COUNTRY... WOMEN RISING ABOVE THEIR STATION...
...ALL THE WAY TO THE "FIRST LADY," AS WE SO IRONICALLY CALL HER.
HA! NOTHING WRONG WITH HER THAT A BIT OF MALE ATTENTION WOULDN'T SOLVE. OF COURSE, WITH A HUSBAND IN A WHEEL-CHAIR...
AND WHOSE FAULT IS THAT? AS I HEAR IT, THAT MAN'S "POLIO" IS REALLY SOME... OTHER DISEASE.
AND ELEA-NOR PASSED IT ON TO HIM... IT'S AFFECTED HIS BRAIN, AS WELL...
WELL! THAT EXPLAINS WHAT HE'S DOING TO THE COUNTRY! SOCIAL SECURITY AND LABOR RELATIONS... CAUSED BY THE "GREAT MONOSYLLABLE," EH?
NOW SEE HERE, 'BAMA, YOU'VE ALWAYS ADVERTISED THE FRIENDLINESS OF YOUR EMPLOYEES, BUT SHE WAS POSITIVELY CONTRARY...
8

DON'T WORRY, COMMISSIONER. I'LL DISMISS HER AT ONCE. YOU KNOW YOUR MONEY TALKS LOUDER THAN ANY SNOOTY LITTLE MISS WHO THINKS SHE CAN SAY NO TO...
WELL, NOW, I..I DIDN'T WANT HER DISMISSED.
AW, YOU'RE SUCH A SOFTY. CAN'T HURT A LITTLE GIRL, EH?
ALL RIGHT. NOW, WE'VE BEATEN AROUND THE BUSH LONG ENOUGH. YOU CALLED US, CRANSTON. WHAT'S IT ABOUT?
SIMPLE ENOUGH. IT'S ABOUT A BLACKMAILER. ONE WHOM I BELIEVE WE ALL KNOW.
NUMBER ONE.
THIS IS PREPOSTEROUS. PREPOSTEROUS! WHAT WOULD I HAVE TO DO WITH A...WITH A...
YOU REMEMBER OUR OLD HUNT CLUB, DON'T YOU, LOVELOCK?
OF COURSE I REMEMBER! BUT NO ONE'S EVER LEARNED ABOUT IT! I TOLD YOU ALL AT THE TIME THAT YOU HAD NOTHING TO FEAR!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT GAME YOU'RE PLAYING, CRANSTON.
9

...BUT I WILL NOT BE INSULTED THIS WAY!
GOOD... HEAVENS!
HE CAN PLAY AT INDIGNATION IF HE WANTS...
...BUT I HAVE NO REASON TO LIE. I'VE PAID MY BLOOD-MONEY TO THIS "NUMBER ONE." I LOOK UPON IT AS JUSTICE.
LIE DOWN WITH VAMPIRES, AND THEY WILL HAVE YOUR BLOOD
WELL, OF COURSE... I'VE PAID MINE. A MAN IN MY POSITION, YOU KNOW. BUT I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT NUMBER ONE
WHAT ABOUT YOU, CRANSTON? WHAT DO YOU KNOW?
CRANSTON? YOU LOOK ALL IN.
I'M AFRAID I'VE BEEN... UNDER THE WEATHER. PERHAPS WE CAN CONTINUE. LATER.
WILL YOU HAVE THE LADY CALL A CAR FOR ME?
10

WHO SENT YOU?
NO ONE!
OH!
RRRIP
CRANSTON, L


GRAAAH!
RRRRRR--
--RRR-UHH!
IT IS NO PAMPERED DEBAUCHER YOU STRUGGLE WITH NOW! I WILL HAVE MY ANSWERS! BY FORCE...
...OR BY THE INFLUENCE OF THE GIRASOL!
WHO IS NUMBER ONE?
NO.
WHO?
NO!
WHO IS HE? WHO IS HE?
NO!
ASTOUNDING. HATRED FOR ME SO INTENSE THAT YOU RESIST EVEN THIS.
WELL. THERE IS ANOTHER WAY...
12


NO!
CALM YOURSELF.
THIS WOMAN CAME TO KILL YOU IN THE HOSPITAL... AS I KNEW ONE WOULD.
I CANNOT HYPNOTIZE HER INTO BETRAYING THE IDENTITY OF NUMBER ONE BUT ANOTHER HYPNOTIC COMMAND WAS MORE SUCCESSFUL...
...A COMMAND THAT SHE LEAD US TO OUR DEATHS!
IT IS THE ONLY WAY. SHE WILL LEAD YOU TO NUMBER ONE AND THIS TIME I WILL BE PREPARED!
THIS TIME?
WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM YOUR OLD FRIENDS?
OH. WELL, I'LL TELL YOU, IF YOU WANT...
...ALTHOUGH I DON'T KNOW IF IT MATTERS... IF WE'RE GOING RIGHT INTO THE DEN...
13

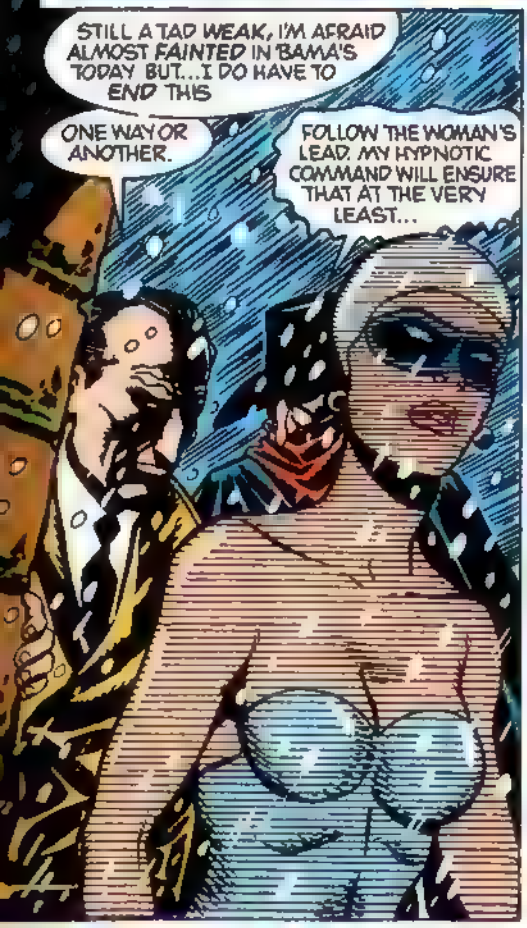
ODALISQUE
BILLY
ONE HUNDRED
VIOLE
BATHING
BEAU
BUT YOU CAN'T CLOSE IT DOWN!

WHAT ARE WE GONNA DO? PRODUCER GOT CROAKED, YOU KNOW.
WHAT AM I GONNA DO? I GOT RENT DUE I CAN'T FIND WORK. NOT NOW.

YOU WANT A PLACE TO STAY FOR A WHILE, I CAN HELP YOU OUT.
YEAH?
YEAH. AT LEAST TILL MY WIFE GETS BACK FROM HER MOTHER'S. YOU KNOW?

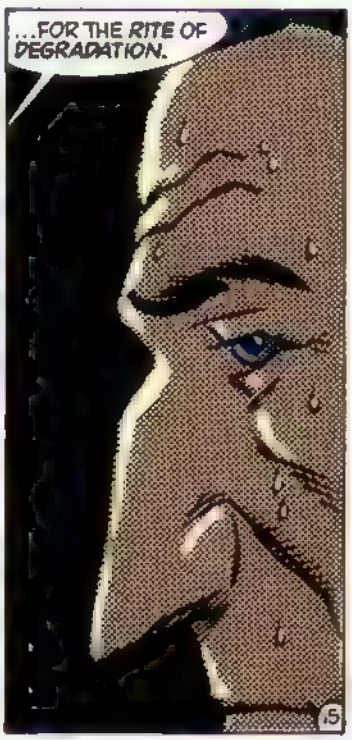
TO HELL WITH YOU. I'LL STARVE FIRST.
YEAH. YOU'LL STARVE, OKAY.

ODALISQUE
CLOSED TEMP
ARE YOU WELL ENOUGH?

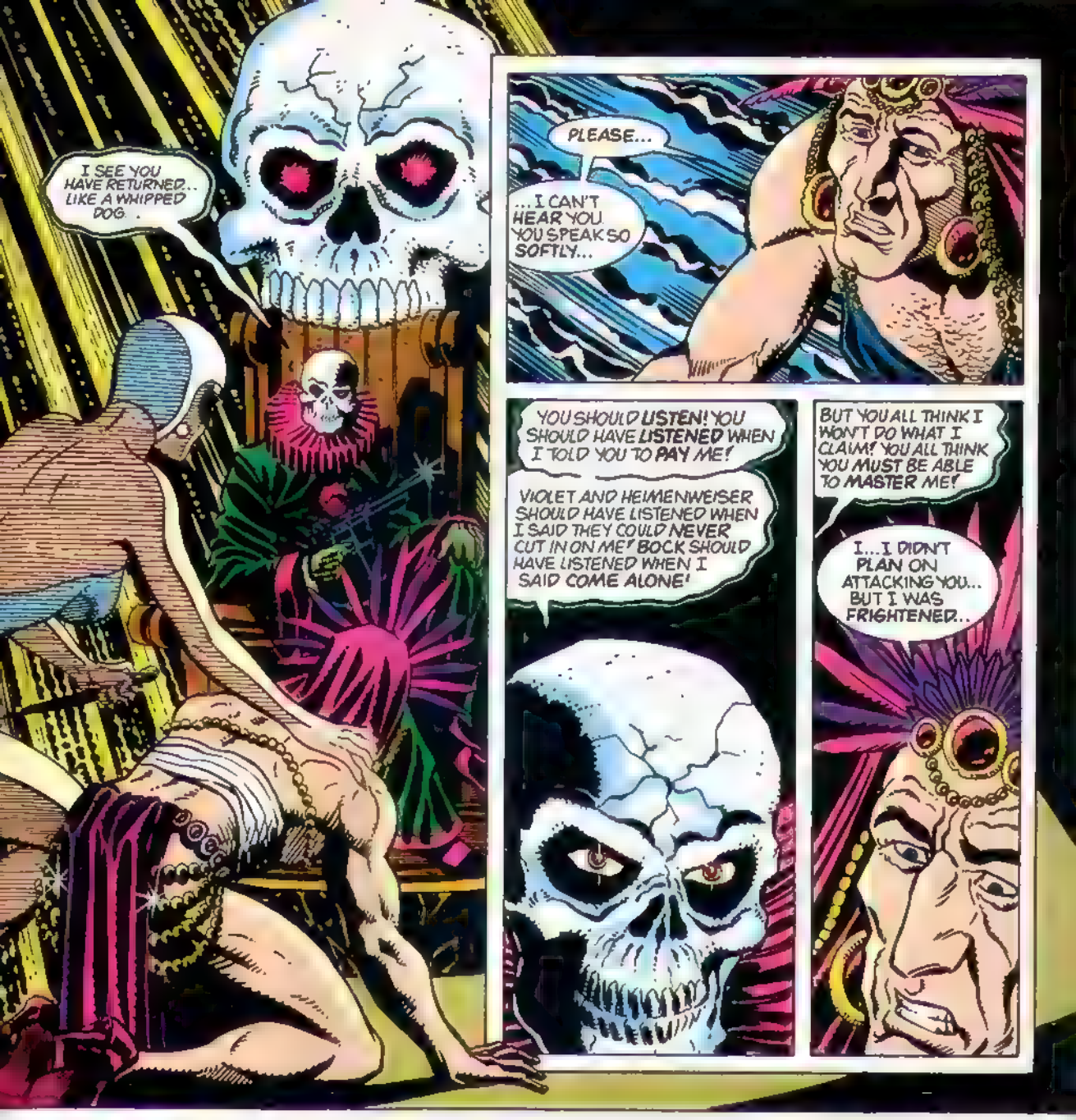

STILL A TAD WEAK, I'M AFRAID ALMOST FAINTED IN BAMA'S TODAY BUT...I DO HAVE TO END THIS
ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.
FOLLOW THE WOMAN'S LEAD. MY HYPNOTIC COMMAND WILL ENSURE THAT AT THE VERY LEAST...

"...YOU WILL MEET NUMBER ONE."

I HAVE BROUGHT THE ONE WHO ATTACKED US LAST NIGHT...LAMONT CRANSTON.
BRING HIM, THEN. NUMBER ONE WILL WANT HIM...


...FOR THE RITE OF DEGRADATION.
15

DO YOU HAVE THE TOOLS?
WE HAVE, NUMBER ONE.
THEN LET US SEE OUR HOSTESS. :Hee-hee:
LET US SEE OUR JESTER...
...OUR HARLEQUIN OF LOVE!


I SEE YOU HAVE RETURNED... LIKE A WHIPPED DOG.
PLEASE...
...I CAN'T HEAR YOU YOU SPEAK SO SOFTLY...
YOU SHOULD LISTEN! YOU SHOULD HAVE LISTENED WHEN I TOLD YOU TO PAY ME!
VIOLET AND HEIMENWEISER SHOULD HAVE LISTENED WHEN I SAID THEY COULD NEVER CUT IN ON ME! BOCK SHOULD HAVE LISTENED WHEN I SAID COME ALONE!
BUT YOU ALL THINK I WON'T DO WHAT I CLAIM! YOU ALL THINK YOU MUST BE ABLE TO MASTER ME!
I...I DIDN'T PLAN ON ATTACKING YOU... BUT I WAS FRIGHTENED..

THEN LET US GIVE YOU REASON TO BE FRIGHTENED!
THE PLATTERS!
17

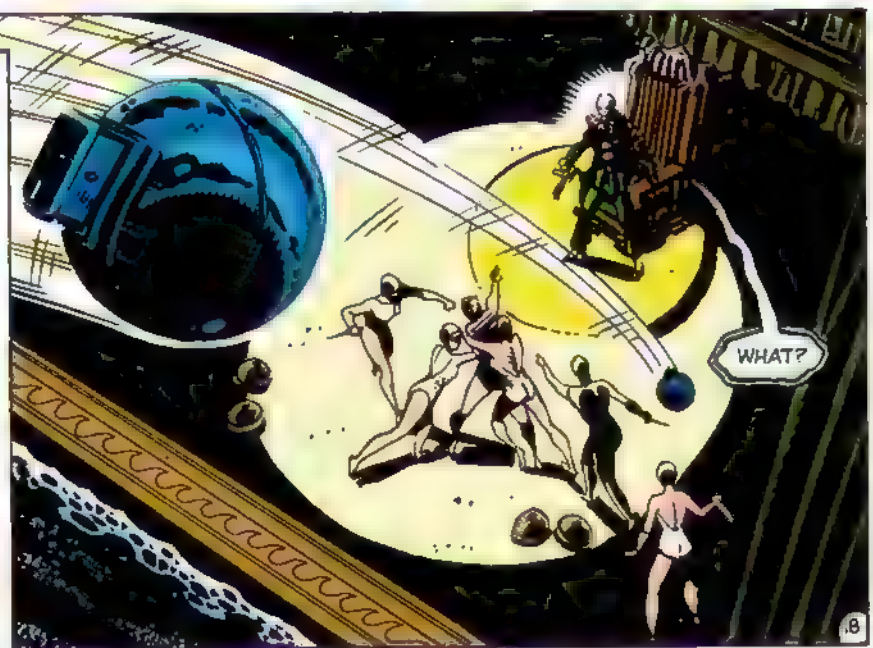
WAIT! WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO ME?
WHY, WE'RE MAKING YOU DECORATIVE, MR CRANSTON...
WE'RE MAKING YOU PRETTY.

IF YOU CAN'T GIVE US MONEY, THEN YOU CAN PLEASE US IN OTHER WAYS AS PLAYTHING. AS SERVANT.
CAN YOU SING, MR. CRANSTON? CAN YOU DANCE?

PLEASE.
AH, THAT'S NICE, MR CRANSTON. YOU CAN PLEAD. BUT DON'T DO IT SO SOMBERLY.
...BAT YOUR EYES, MR. CRANSTON. TURN YOUR GREAT BROWN EYES UP AT US AND MAKE US FEEL... MASTERFUL... POWERFUL...

DAMN YOU!
NO, NO! NOW YOU'VE OVERSTEPPED YOUR PLACE, DARLING. NOW WE'LL HAVE TO SHOW YOU HOW THE WORLD WORKS.

...DECORATE HIM!


WHAT?

BASHOOM
BASHOOM
GAS!
GET CRANSTON! TAKE CRANSTON AND--
--NO!
GYARRH!
HAHAH
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA H
SPLASH

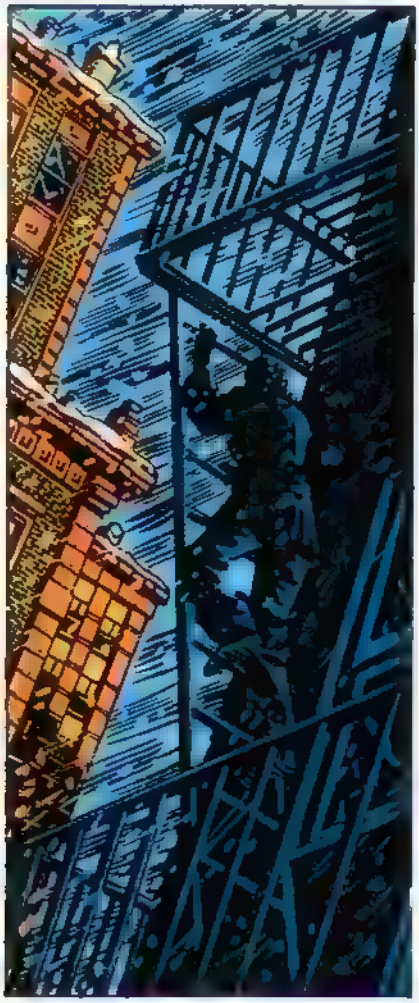
BAM
BAM
BAM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
hwukh hwuh hwuh hak
NUMBER ONE FLEES, CRANSTON. AWAIT ME—
GOOD LORD!
I KNOW THAT WOMAN!
SHE'S THE CIGARETTE GIRL AT 'BAMA'S!

BAM!
WHAT--?
OH!
MY GOD... HE MUST HAVE KNOWN HE WAS TRAPPED, AND...
WE SHALL SEE .
LOVELOCK!

YOU KNOW... I SUSPECTED IT WAS HIM.
THEN YOU ARE EASILY DUPED.

THIS MAN HAS BEEN DEAD FOR AT LEAST AN HOUR...LEFT HERE TO CONFUSE INVESTIGATORS.
NUMBER ONE IS YET ON THE LOOSE...

...AND I KNOW WHO HE IS!



22

STOP THERE...
...ELIZABETH "BAMA" CAULFIELD.

HOW...?
LOVELOCK SPOKE OF HIS LONG RELATIONSHIP WITH HER, OF THEIR "GOOD OLD DAYS" AND HER KNOWLEDGE OF MEN.
SHE WAS PREY... AND PROCURESS... FOR YOUR "HUNT CLUB." SHE KNEW YOU ALL... AND WHAT EPISODES YOU WOULD LIKE TO KEEP PRIVATE.

YES--I SOLD MYSELF--AND I PROFITED FROM THE SALE OF OTHER WOMEN--YES--
--BECAUSE I HAD NO CHOICE! BECAUSE BEING A WOMAN DENIED ME THE POWER TO MAKE MY OWN MONEY--TO SURVIVE WITHOUT SERVITUDE--

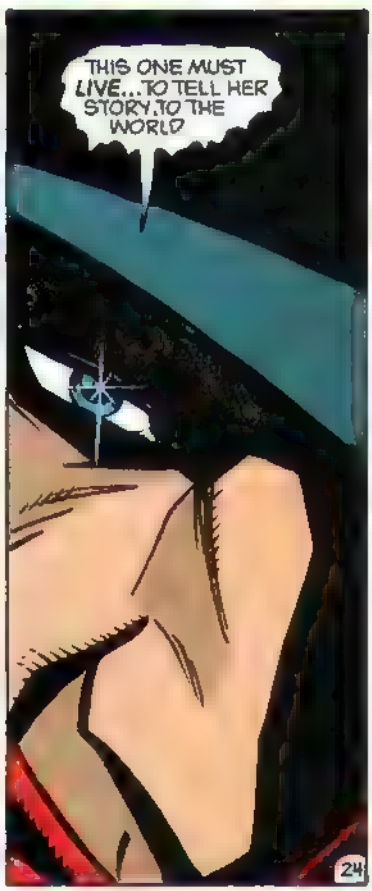
--SERVITUDE TO MEN LIKE HIM... WITH THEIR PHONY GALLANTRY, TREATING WOMEN LIKE DELICATE LITTLE FLOWERS... WHILE THEY CRIPPLE US!
WELL, I SHOWED THEM .. FOR A FEW PRECIOUS YEARS, THEY WERE NUMBER TWO!

I MADE THEM INTO AMUSEMENTS. COMMODITIES... BAUBLES FOR PRESTIGE.
AND EVEN WHEN THEY CRINGED BEFORE ME, AND HEARD THE VOICE I AFFECTED... EVEN THEN, THEY THOUGHT I MUST BE A MAN...
23

...BECAUSE I HAD POWER! YES I'D BEEN A HARLEQUIN OF SEX LONG ENOUGH
BUT, I HAD FUN BEING A HARLEQUIN OF...
...DEATH!
BLANG
BOOM!

I AM AFRAID THAT DEATH IS NOT TO BE YOURS--YET.

AND I THOUGHT YOU KILLED EVERY-ONE YOU CAME UP AGAINST.
NO. NOT THIS ONE


THIS ONE MUST LIVE...TO TELL HER STORY.TO THE WORLD

EVENING CLASSIC
WESTON TIED TO KILLER "HOSTESS"
PIER 9
WELL, YOU CERTAINLY HAVE NEW YORK IN AN UPROAR. I'M SURPRISED YOU'D MAKE THINGS SO STICKY FOR WESTON...
GETCHA CLASSIC! READ ABOUTCHA SUGAR-DADDIES MURDERED BY BLACK-WIDDA GOOD-TIME GIRL? SEX SLAYIN'S!
...NOT TO MENTION FOR LAMONT CRANSTON... WHO, MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, IS YOU.
MY MISSION IS TO AVENGE THE INNOCENT. NUMBER ONE LEFT FOUR VICTIMS. THE INEQUITIES OF OUR WORLD HAVE LEFT MILLIONS.
WE CANNOT SWEEP SUCH STORIES UNDER THE RUG FOREVER.
THEN I TAKE IT YOU'LL CONTINUE PLAYING THE CRANSTON ROLE?
SO LONG AS YOU WISH TO REMAIN AN ANONYMOUS WORLD TRAVELLER.
IT SUITS ME. AND IF SOMEONE CAN MAKE HIMSELF LOOK SO MUCH LIKE ME THAT NO ONE BOTHERS TO LOOK FOR ME... SO MUCH THE BETTER.
HWOOO
THAT CALLS FOR ME, I'M AFRAID. TREAT MY NAME WELL, WILL YOU?
BETTER THAN YOU HAVE, I THINK. BON VOYAGE, CRANSTON...
"...AND LET US HOPE THAT YOUR PAST WILL BRING US NO MORE SURPRISES."
NEXT: NOTHING TO LOSE BUT YOUR CHAINS!

GIRLS, GORILLAS, and a whole ton of trouble!
ANGEL AND THE APE
GUEST-STARRING GORILLA GRODD FROM THE FLASH!
A FOUR-ISSUE MINISERIES IN DC'S STANDARD FORMAT BY PHIL FOGLIO & KEITH WILSON
BEGINNING IN FEBRUARY!
DC

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DOING TIME
AND
FIGHTING CRIME
90 DAYS
EMERALD DAWN II
CONTINUING THE TALE OF
GREEN LANTERN'S ORIGIN
RE-UNITING THE CREATIVE
TEAM OF THE ORIGINAL SERIES
GIFFEN•JONES•BRIGHT•TANGHAL
SIX ISSUES
BEGINNING IN MARCH
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JUST IMAGINE!

THE MIGHTIEST HEROES OF THEIR TIME...

STARMAN!
BLACK CANARY!
FLASH!
GREEN LANTERN!
HAWKMAN!

...HAVE BANDED TOGETHER AS THE

JUSTICE SOCIETY of America

TO STAMP OUT THE FORCES OF EVIL WHEREVER AND WHENEVER THEY APPEAR!

THE THRILLING EXPLOITS OF THESE FAMOUS CHAMPIONS APPEAR IN THE *NEW*

WRITTEN BY LEN STRAZEWSKI
DRAWN BY RICK BURCHETT, GRANT MIEHM, MIKE PAROBECK & TOM ARTIS

MINI-SERIES *ON SALE IN EARLY 1991!*

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